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outer surface until after the Deluge. When an Indian story is told, it is like all other gifts, "to be taken for what it is worth," and for any seeming inconsistency in their traditions there is no remedy; for as far as I have tried to reconcile them by reasoning with, or questioning them, I have been entirely defeated; and more than that, have generally incurred their distrust and ill-will. One of the Mandan doctors told me very gravely a few days since, that the earth was a large tortoise, that it carried the dirt on its back—that a tribe of people, who are now dead, and whose faces were white, used to dig down very deep in this ground to catch *badgers;* and that one day they stuck a knife through the tortoise-shell, and it sunk down so that the water ran over its back, and drowned all but one man. And on the next day while I was painting his portrait, he told me there were *four tortoises,*—one in the North—one in the East—one in the South, and one in the West; that each one of these rained ten days, and the water covered over the earth. 773

These ignorant and conflicting accounts, and both from the same man, give as good a demonstration, perhaps, of what I have above mentioned, as to the inefficiency of Indian traditions as anything I could at present mention. They might, perhaps, have been in this instance however the creeds of different sects, or of different priests amongst them, who often advance diametrically opposite theories and traditions relative to history and mythology.

And however ignorant and ridiculous they may seem, they are yet worthy of a little further consideration, as relating to a number of curious circumstances connected with the unaccountable religious ceremonies which I have just described

The Mandan chiefs and doctors, in all their feasts, where the pipe is lit and about to be passed around, deliberately propitiate the good-will and favour of the Great Spirit, by extending the stem of the pipe *upwards* before they smoke it themselves; and also as deliberately and as strictly offering the stem to the four *cardinal points* in succession, and then drawing a whiff through it, passing it around amongst the group. 782 788

The *annual religious ceremony* invariably lasts *four* days, and the other following circumstances attending these strange forms, and seeming to have some allusion to the *four* cardinal points, or the "four tortoises," seem to me to be worthy of further notice. *Four* men are selected by Nu-mohk-muck-a-nah (as I have before said), to cleanse out and prepare the medicine-lodge for the occasion—one he calls from the *north* part of the village—one from the *east*—one from the *south*, and one from the *west*. The *four* sacks of water, in form of large tortoises, resting on the floor of the lodge and before described, would seem to be typical of the same thing; and also the *four* buffalo, and the *four* human skulls resting on the floor of the same lodge—the *four* couples of dancers in the "bull-dance," as before described; and also the *four* intervening dancers in the same dance, and also described. 796 801

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796 801 The bull-dance in front of the medicine-lodge, repeated on the *four* days, is danced *four* times on the first day, *eight* times on the second, *twelve* times on the third, and *sixteen* times on the *fourth*; (adding *four* dances on each of the *four* days,) which added together make *forty*, the exact number of days that it rained upon the earth, according to the Mosaic account, to produce the Deluge. There are *four* sacrifices of black and blue cloths erected over the door of the medicine-lodge—the visits of Oh-kee-hee-de (or Evil Spirit) were paid to *four* of the buffaloes in the buffalo-dance, as above described; and in every instance, the young men who underwent the tortures before explained, had *four* splints or skewers run through the flesh on their legs—*four* through the arms and *four* through the body.

000 Such is a brief account of these strange scenes which I have just been witnessing, and such my brief history of the Mandans. I might write much more on them, giving yet a volume on their stories and traditions; but it would be a volume of fables, and scarce worth recording. A nation of Indians in their primitive condition, where there are no historians, have but a temporary historical existence, for the reasons above advanced, and their history, what can be certainly learned of it, may be written in a very small compass.

I have dwelt longer on the history and customs of these people than I have or shall on any other tribe, in all probability, and that from the fact that I have found them a very peculiar people, as will have been seen by my notes.

From these very numerous and striking peculiarities in their personal appearance—their customs—traditions and language, I have been led conclusively to believe that they are a people of decidedly a different origin from that of any other tribe in these regions.

From these reasons, as well as from the fact that they are a small and feeble tribe, against whom the powerful tribe of Sioux are waging a deadly war with the prospect of their extermination; and who with their limited numbers, are not likely to hold out long in their struggle for existence, I have taken more pains to pourtray their whole character, than my limited means will allow me to bestow upon other tribes.

From the ignorant and barbarous and disgusting customs just recited, the world would naturally infer, that these people must be the most cruel and inhuman beings in the world—yet, such is not the case, and it becomes my duty to say it; a better, more honest, hospitable and kind people, as a community, are not to be found in the world. No set of men that ever I associated with have better hearts than the Mandans, and none are quicker to embrace and welcome a white man than they are—none will press him closer to his bosom, that the pulsation of his heart may be felt, than a Mandan; and no man in any country will keep his word and guard his honour more closely.

The shocking and disgusting custom that I have just described, sickens